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Committee on Conferences
Substantive session of 2005

Draft report

Addendum

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II. Calendar of conferences and meetings

C. Improved utilization of conference-servicing resources and facilities

Provision of interpretation services to meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States

Introduction and overview

1. At its 465th meeting, on 19 September 2005, the Committee considered the statistical data and analysis contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the pattern of conferences concerning the provision of conference services for meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States during the period from 1 May 2004 to 30 April 2005 (A/60/93, paras. 17-30 and annex II). There had been a dramatic 29 per cent increase in the number of meetings requested by regional and other major groupings and held without interpretation. The percentage of meetings that were provided with interpretation during the reporting period 2004-2005 had decreased, in relative terms, to 85 per cent from 90 per cent during the previous period. Moreover, in absolute terms, the total number of meetings provided with interpretation also decreased. While the introduction of eMeets as a tool for requesting conference facilities has brought about an improvement in the quality of services, the continuously high workload stemming from the sessions of calendar bodies left little capacity for accommodating additional meetings.

Discussion

2. Concern was expressed about the apparent lack of contingency arrangements for meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States during times

of peak activity. It was also suggested that the improvement in the overall utilization factor was something of a mixed blessing, as it effectively left fewer resources for reassignment to regional and other major groupings. Some delegations expressed disappointment at the proposals made for improving the situation. Some expressed the view that existing practices should be changed and that it might be wise to dedicate specific resources for such meetings, as had been suggested but not approved in previous years. The view was also expressed that the work of the sessions of the calendar bodies were the Department's main priority and that the regional groupings were accommodated on an ad hoc basis, in accordance with established practice. The representative of the Secretariat referred delegates to paragraph 30 of the report, in which it was stated that unless dedicated funds were provided for regional group meetings, the Secretariat must depend on the flexibility of Member States in moving meeting dates to further improve the chances of obtaining interpretation. The report also suggested that the needs of regional and other major groupings might be incorporated into the organization of work of calendar bodies as "related reassignments".